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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit combines folk tales and art from Guatemala and Mexico. The unit introduces students to traditional stories and local art of the indigenous people, as well as some details about the culture and geography of the area. It contains four lesson plans: (1) "The Race of Toad and Deer" (Guatemala), mask and play, grades 2-4; (2) "People of Corn" (Guatemala), textile pattern bookmark, grades 6-8; (3) "The Woman Who Outshone the Sun" (Oaxaca, Mexico), animal sculpture, grades 4-8; and (4) "Cuckoo/Cucu" (Mexico), ornament and puppet and play, grades K-2. Each lesson details time needed, materials needed, objectives, evaluation methods, and activity procedures. (Contains a 4-item bibliography of Mexican and Guatemalan folk tales to go with the lesson plans and a 6-item bibliography of other folk tales.) (BT)

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Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad
Guatemala/Mexico
Summer 2000

"Mesoamerican Indigenous Society at the Millennium: Historic and Contemporary Perspectives"

Curriculum Project
by Teresa Wittmann

The following four lessons plans combine folk tales and art from the areas traveled and studied during the summer seminar to Guatemala and Mexico. They introduce students to traditional stories and local art of the indigenous people, as well as some details about the culture and geography of the area. Folk tales and art from these areas are often overlooked or not understood, so these lessons help students gain some understanding and appreciation of the rich cultures of these indigenous people.

All the folk tales are found in quality picture books which can be effectively shared and discussed with groups of students. The illustrations in the books also support and inspire the art projects in the lessons. The books are available in libraries or book stores. It is best to have a variety of actual examples of the art for each lesson, but photographs and drawings could also be used.

Lesson Plans:

The Race of Toad and Deer (Guatemala) - Mask and play

People of Corn (Guatemala)- Textile Pattern Bookmark

The Woman Who Outshone the Sun (Oaxaca, Mexico)
- Animal Sculpture

Cuckoo/Cucu (Mexico)- Primary option- Ornament
Intermediate option - Puppet and play
Spanish language option - Puppet and play

The Race of Toad and Deer
Lesson Plan

Topic: Guatemalan Folk Tales and Masks

Project: Masks and play

Age level: Grades 2-4

Time: Three sessions (30-45 minutes each) and one 20-minute session to share the play with another group of students.

Materials: The Race of Toad and Deer retold by Pat Mora. New York: Orchard Books, 1995.
Guatemalan masks (or photos of various masks)
Supplies for making masks, such as: tagboard, craft sticks, markers, paint, etc.
A sample paper mask (to show how it will be made)
Map of the world or Central America
Two paper charts for lists
Script of The Race of Toad and Deer (below)

Objectives: Students will:
-locate Guatemala on a map and discuss the land, climate, animals, and language.
- listen to the story and discuss the plot, the characters, and the lessons in the story.
-compare the illustrations in the story to Guatemalan masks (or photos of masks).
-create masks for the characters in the story.
-act out the story using a script

Evaluation: 1) Participation and listening during discussions and read aloud time. 2) Creation of mask to represent a character in the play. 3) Acting out and reading part using a script for an audience.

1st Session:

1. Introduce the book and explain that it is based on a Guatemalan folk tale.
2. Locate Guatemala on a map. Discuss what the climate and the land might be like. List the animals that might be found in the jungle.
3. Read the story aloud. Discuss the characters and how Toad tricked Deer. Discuss the lessons in the story and how it compares to the fable, The Tortoise and the Hare.
4. Go over the Spanish vocabulary words in the story. List each one and the English equivalent using the hints in the story.
5. Explain that the students will be making masks and acting out the play later.

2nd Session:

1. Review the story and list all the characters. Add three narrators (any jungle animal) to the list. Students pick or are given parts of specific animals in the play. Explain which parts require more reading.
2. Show the Guatemalan masks (or photos) and compare them to the illustrations in the books. Encourage students to think of simple physical traits and bold colors and patterns that will show their animal's personality. Show the sample paper mask.
3. Students each make and decorate a paper mask for their character. Glue each completed mask to a craft stick so it can be held.
4. If there is time, give a script to each student so they can read over it.

3rd Session:

1. Review everyone's part and hand out the scripts. Go over details, such as acting out stage directions, but not saying them and saying lines together as a group.
2. Review the Spanish vocabulary and how to say each one.
3. Set out the stage area so students know where to go and put each students in their place.
4. Students act out the play while reading from the script and holding their mask. Direct and repeat parts as needed.

4th Session:

1. Introduce the story and where it is from to the audience of another group of students. Explain the Spanish vocabulary.
2. Students act out and read the play with their masks for the audience.

The Race of Toad and Deer

Narrator 1	Venado (Deer)	Sapo (Toad)
Narrator 2	Toads	Parrots
Narrator 3	Old Toad	Old Toucan
Spider Monkeys	Many Jungle Animals	

Narrator 1: The moon rose slowly over the jungle. Sapo, the toad, and his friends were singing and singing at their favorite pond. They sang so loudly they did not hear the large creature moving toward them.

Venado: Silencio. Stop all this racket. I am the largest deer in the jungle and I want quiet when I drink.

Narrator 2: The toads were angry and frightened. But Sapo just went on singing.

Venado: I said quiet! I am the ruler of this jungle. I am the biggest and the fastest.

Sapo: Not faster than I am. *(bravely and stretching tall)*

Venado: *(Laughing)* Uncle Toad, dear Tio Sapo, I'll race you tomorrow, and we'll see who wins.

Narrator 3: As the sun rose over the green jungle the next day, spider monkeys were swinging through the trees and jaguar rested in the shade. Parrots were squawking the news.

Parrots: Race today! Carrera hoy! Race today!

Monkeys: Who's racing? Who's racing?

Jaguar: Toad and Deer will race today.

Monkeys: Yes, Sapo and Venado will race today!

Narrator1: The parrots and monkeys hid in the trees and watched Venado look at himself proudly in the lake.

Venado: I am the fastest runner in the jungle. My legs are swifter than the wind. I always win.

Narrator 2: At the other end of the lake, Sapo wished his friends a good morning.

Sapo: Buenos dias, mis amigos.

Toads: Buenos dias, Sapo. We know you can win the race. You can! *(hopping up and down)*

Sapo: I can win only if you help me. Mis amigos, will you help me win the race today?

Old Toad: We are your amigos, Sapo. Of course we will help you win. You are a smart one, and you always have a plan. What must we do?

Sapo: Come close and I'll tell you.

Narrator 3: Late that afternoon as the sun was setting, all the animals of the jungle came to watch the race. Toucans and butterflies rushed through the trees. Spider monkeys swung from limb to limb.

Parrots: Race time! Carrera! Carrera!

Narrator 1: Armadillos, javelinas, anteaters, iguanas, and bush dogs moved through the steamy jungle, all eager to watch the race. Soon tapirs, crocodiles, pheasants, and wild turkeys lined the dirt path.

Jungle animals: Buenos dias! Buenos dias!

Narrator 2: In the leaves and roots along the path, Sapo's toad friends were hiding, ready to help their friends.

Venado: Ready, little Tio Sapo?

Sapo: Ready, Uncle Deer!

Old Toucan: Go!

Narrator 3: Down the path raced Sapo and Venado. After a few leaps, Venado called back.

Venado: Adelante, Tio Sapo, forward!

Narrator 1: To Venado's surprise, from down the path he heard a toad voice.

Toad 1: Adelante, Tio Venado, forward!

Narrator 2: Venado was confused. He raced faster. Sapo, far behind, hopped steadily, steadily down the path.

Jungle animals: Go, Sapo, go!

Narrator 3: Venado called again back down the path.

Venado: Adelante, Tio Sapo!

Narrator 1: But again he heard a voice ahead of him call.

Toad 2: Adelante, Tio Venado!

Narrator 2: Sapo hopped steadily, steadily down the path, but Venado raced faster and faster. His legs began to hurt, but he kept leaping farther and farther.

Narrator 3: He was becoming tired, very tired. One last time he called down the path.

Venado: Adelante, Tio Sapo. *(gasping)*

Narrator 1: Again he heard a toad's voice down the path.

Toad 3: Adelante, Tio Venado!

Narrator 2: Finally, Venado saw the finish line. Venado's strong legs were shaking. His tongue was hanging out. He was panting so hard from racing faster and leaping parther that he could barely move.

Narrator 3: But Sapo just hopped steadily, steadily down the path.

Jungle Animals: Go, Sapo, go!

Narrator 1: Yes, Sapo hopped right by tired, proud Venado gasping for breath. When he neared the finish line Sapo called back.

Sapo: Adelante, Tio Venado!

Jungle Animals: Sapo won! Sapo won!

Sapo: WE won the race, mis amigos! Together, we won the big race!

Narrator 2: Old Toucan called Venado forward to place the crown on Sapo's small head. Venado shuffled forward very slowly, in no hurry.

Narrator 3: Suddenly, he heard many voices shouting, calling him forward.

Jungle Animals: Adelante, Tio Venado!

People of Corn Lesson Plan

Topic: Guatemalan folk tales and textiles

Project: Bookmark

Age level: Grades 6-8

Time: Two 45-minute sessions

Materials: People of Corn: A Mayan Story retold by Mary-Joan Gerson. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.
Examples of Guatemalan textiles (or photos)
Handout of common textile patterns (below)
Descriptions and examples of animals from ancient Mayans
World map
Small square graph paper
Markers and pencils
Scissors
Tagboard cut in bookmark size strips
Glue
Laminator (optional)

Objectives: Students will:
-locate Guatemala on a world map and discuss the culture of the modern Mayan people and their history.
-listen to a folk tale and discuss the plot and moral.
-examine the illustrations and compare them to Guatemalan textiles (or photos). Discuss the importance of textiles in the folk tale.
-create a bookmark decorated with animals and patterns from Guatemalan textiles.
-share and explain the bookmark.

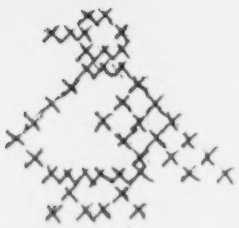
Evaluation: 1) Participation and listening during discussions and read aloud time. 2) Creation of a bookmark using colors, animals, and patterns from Guatemalan textiles. 3) Sharing and explanation of the bookmark design.

Activities:

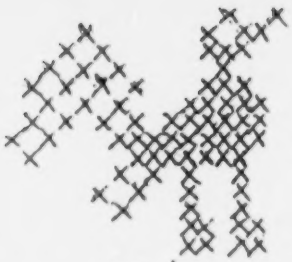
1. Introduce the book and explain that it is a Guatemalan folk tale adapted from the Popol Vuh. Locate Guatemala on a world map and discuss the culture and history of the Mayan People.
2. Show examples of animals from ancient Mayan culture and discuss the meaning and importance of each one.
3. Read the folk tale aloud and discuss the plot and moral.
4. Carefully look at the illustrations for examples of the importance of textiles. Compare the illustrations to Guatemalan textiles (or photos). Using the handout of common textile patterns, look for examples in the illustrations and actual textiles. Discuss and list similarities in style and color.
5. Students create a bookmark on graph paper using the examples of animals, patterns, and colors in Guatemalan textiles. The finished bookmarks are glued on tagboard and laminated if possible.
6. Students share their bookmark and explain the significance of the animals, patterns, and colors they chose.

hen

rabbit



bird



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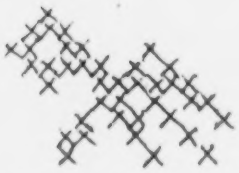
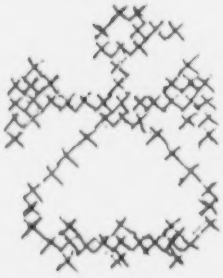
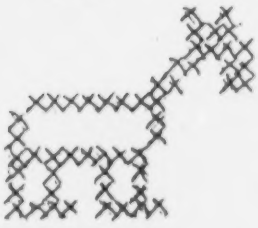


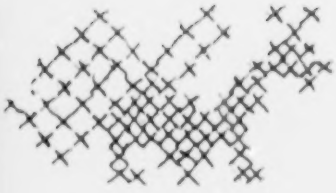
dog



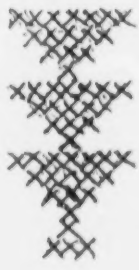
bird



donkey



deer



plant

serpent pattern

4 directions pattern
(north, south, east, west)

(Adapted from Guatemalan textile patterns)

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The Woman Who Outshone The Sun
Lesson Plan

Topic: Mexican folk art and folk tales from Oaxaca

Project: Animal sculptures

Age level: Grades 4-8

Time: Two 45-minute sessions

Materials: The Woman Who Outshone the Sun by Alejandro Cruz Martinez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1991.
Examples of Oaxacan wooden animals
Descriptions and examples of animals in ancient cultures of Mexico
Map of Mexico and world map
Wet Set clay or similar type of play dough
Markers or paint and brushes

Objectives: Students will:
-locate Mexico on a world map and Oaxaca on a map of Mexico.
-listen to folk tale and discuss the plot, characters and moral.
-discuss the origin of the story and what makes it a folk tale.
-examine the illustrations in the book and compare them to Oaxacan folk art animals.
-create small animal sculpture similar to the Oaxacan style.
-share and explain their sculpture.

Evaluation: 1) Participation and listening during discussions and read aloud time. 2) Creation of animal sculpture similar to the Oaxacan style. 3) Sharing and explanation of their sculpture.

Activities:
1. Introduce the book and explain that it is from the Zapotec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico. Locate Mexico on the world map and Oaxaca on a map of Mexico. Discuss the culture of the Zapotec Indians and

explain the history of the book using the information on the last page.

2. Show examples of animals from ancient cultures of Mexico and discuss the meaning and importance of each one.
3. Show the wooden animals from Oaxaca and ask students to look for similarities with the illustrations in the book.
4. Read the story aloud. Discuss the plot, characters and the moral.
5. Discuss and list which elements make this a folk tale.
6. Look at the illustrations in the book and compare them to the Oaxacan wooden animals. List similarities in style and color.
7. Students pick an animal that is special to them for some reason and create their own animal sculpture in the Oaxacan folk art style.
8. When the sculptures are dry, students use markers or paint to decorate their animals in the Oaxacan folk art style.
9. Students share their sculpture and explain why they picked that animal and why they chose certain colors or patterns to decorate it.

Cuckoo/Cucu Lesson Plans

Primary Level Option:

Topic: Mayan Indian folk tale from Mexico and Mexican folk art

Project: Primary option - ornaments
Intermediate option - puppets and play
Spanish language option - puppets and play

Age level: Grades K-2

Time: One 45-minute session

Materials: Cuckoo/Cucu by Lois Ehlert. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.
World map
Examples of Mexican folk art, especially animals
Outlines for Mexican ornaments (from title page of book), cut out and with a hole at the top.
String or yarn
Crayons or markers.

Objectives: Students will:
-listen to folk tale and discuss the plot and the lesson in it.
-discuss the art in the book and compare it to examples of Mexican folk art.
-create an ornament in the style of Mexican folk art

Evaluation: 1) Participation and listening during discussion and read aloud time. 2) Creation of ornament.

Activities:
1. Introduce the book and explain that it is based on a folk tale of the Mayan Indians in Mexico. Locate Mexico on the map and explain that the official language is Spanish, so the book is written in both English and Spanish.
2. Read the story aloud. Discuss what happens and the lesson learned.
3. Discuss the art in the book and explain that it was inspired by Mexican

folk art. Show examples of Mexican folk art and compare it to the illustrations. Discuss the bright colors and simple shapes.

4. Students decorate the ornament outlines in a similar style. Thread yarn or string through the hole to hang the ornament.

Intermediate Level Options:

Topic: Mayan Indian folk tale from Mexico and Mexican folk art

Age level: Grades 2-5

Time: Two 45-minute sessions

Materials: Cuckoo/Cucu by Lois Ehlert. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.
World map
Examples of Mexican folk art, especially birds
Supplies for making puppets:
Option #1 - Model Magic or other playdough, markers, craft sticks
Option #2 - tagboard, scissors, markers or crayons, metal paper fasteners
Option #3 - thin cardboard, aluminum foil, scissors, markers, paper punch, string or yarn, outlines from title page in book
Reference books on birds and mammals
Puppet theatre or stage area
Script for Cuckoo (below)

Objectives: Students will:
- listen to a folk tale and discuss the plot and moral
- locate Mexico on a map and discuss the Mayan Indians
-discuss Mexican folk art using examples to make generalizations
- compare the illustrations in the book to the folk art
- make a puppet in the style of Mexican folk art for the play
- act out and read play using script

Evaluation: 1) Participation and listening during discussion and read aloud times. 2) Creation of puppet in Mexican folk art style.

3) Acting out and reading part using a script.

Activities:

1. Introduce the book and explain that it is based on a folk tale of the Mayan Indians in Mexico. Locate Mexico on the map and talk about where and when the ancient Mayan Indians lived and where Mayan Indians mainly live now and which languages they speak.
2. Show the examples of Mexican folk art and ask students to look for similarities in the illustrations of the book.
3. Read the book aloud and discuss the plot and moral.
4. Compare the illustrations with the examples of Mexican folk art. Make generalizations about style and color.
5. Students select or are given a part in the play. Students use reference books to find out visual details for their character so they are identifiable.
6. Students make one of the types of puppets in the style of Mexian folk art. Option #1 are small sculptures on sticks, based on ceramic folk art birds. Option #2 are hinged cutouts based on the illustrations in the book. Option #3 are cardboard shapes (from outlines on title page of book) covered in aluminum foil and decorated with markers. These are then made into ornaments using a paper punch and yarn.
7. Students act out and read their parts in the play using the script and their puppet. The story can also be performed for another class.

Spanish Language Option:

Use the plans for the intermediate level, but create a script for the play in Spanish using the book and the English version of the script below. All or part of the activities can then be done in Spanish.

Cuckoo Script

Narrator 1	**Cuckoo**	**Parrots**	**Roosters**
Narrator 2	**Dogs**	**Owl**	**Flowers**
Narrator 3	**Doves**	**Mole**	**Sun and Moon**

Narrator 1: Cuckoo was beautiful. Trouble was, she knew it.

Parrot 1: Cuckoo's pretty.

Parrots 2 and 3: Pretty lazy. Never helps us collect seeds. She's stuck on herself.

Narrator 2: All day long Cuckoo flew and sang.

Cuckoo: *Cu-koo, cu-koo, prit-E, sweet, sweet, sweet.*

Narrator 3: Flowers opened to her lovely song. Roosters nearby stopped crowing. Dogs forgot to bark.

Narrator 1: But even the sweetest song can turn sour.

Doves: Shoo, Cuckoo, we're tired of you, and your singing, too.

Owl: Cuckoo! Stop singing and go to sleep! Early tomorrow we start our seed collecting.

Narrator 2: Each year, after the field plants dried, the birds collected beans and corn, and pepper, squash, and tomato seeds and dropped them on Mole's hill.

Narrator 3: Those seeds would be planted later, to grow food for another season.

Narrator 1: The birds fell asleep dreaming of seeds. Even Owl was napping.

Narrator 2: Cuckoo soon got bored singing to herself. As she dipped down to her branch, something red flickered through the trees.

Cuckoo: What's that? Some flashy new bird? Better chase it away.

Narrator 3: But it wasn't a bird. It was a field fire. Mole was out. He had smelled smoke.

Mole: Cuckoo, can you save the seeds? You can drop them here in my tunnel.

Narrator 1: There was no time to wake the other birds. Red flames were licking higher, higher, coming closer and closer.

Narrator 2: So Cuckoo began. It was a hot and scary job. Her rainbow feathers became scorched from fire. Her eyes, flame red from smoke.

Narrator 3: From the fiery fields to the cool woods, Cuckoo flew, carrying seeds to Mole's tunnel. All night long.

Narrator 1: At sunrise Cuckoo dropped the last ear of corn down Mole's tunnel. Tired but happy, she tried to sing, but she almost couldn't because of her smoky throat.

Cuckoo: *Cu-koo, cu-koo.*

Narrator 2: The birds woke up to Cuckoo's raspy cry. They gasped when they saw the blackened fields. The seeds were gone. No seeds left to plant meant no food for later.

Narrator 3: Then they saw a scorched bird circling above.

Doves: Is that you, Cuckoo?

Narrator 1: The birds waited for Cuckoo to land. When she told them that the seeds were safe, they all clapped their wings.

Narrator 2: And they all agreed in the end: You can't tell much about a bird by looking at its feathers.

Bibliography of Mexican and Guatemalan Folk Tales

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